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- Annals of the Cyprus Nat. Hist. Soc. (No. 4, 1912-13. Nicosia, 1913.)
- The Austral Avian Record. (Vol. ii. Nos. 2, 3. London, 1913.)
- Avicultural Magazine. (3rd Series, Vol. v. Nos. 1, 2, 1913.)
- Bird Notes. (New Series, Vol. iv. Nos. 10-12, 1913.)
- British Birds. (Vol. vii. Nos. 5-7, 1913.)
- Bull. Brit. Orn. Club. (No. exc. 1913.)
- The Condor. (Vol. xv. No. 5, 1913.)
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- Le Gerfaut. Revue Belge d'Ornithologie. (3rd Année, No. 10. Bruxelles, 1913.)
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- Die Schwalbe. Bericht des Komitees für Ornithologische Beobachtungs-Stationen in Österreich. (Neue Folge iii. 1912-13. Wien, 1913.)
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- Zoologischer Anzeiger. (Bd. xlii. Nos. 11-13; Bd. xliii. Nos. 1-6, 1913.)
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#### VII.—*Letters, Extracts, and Notes.*

We have received the following letters addressed "to the Editor":—

SIR,—Might I bring the following interesting occurrence of the Baikal Teal [*Nettion formosum* (Georgi)] to your notice. During my stay in Malta last spring I made the acquaintance of a local ornithologist, Despott by name. In his collection of birds I was rather surprised to discover a beautiful example of the Baikal Teal, and on enquiring into its history I learned the following facts:—

A local sportsman, Fidele Caruana by name, on the 16th of April, 1913, shot one of three ducks of this species which he discovered swimming alone in St. George's Bay, Birzebbugia, Malta. As its identity puzzled him he brought the

bird to Despott, who purchased it for his collection. I enclose a photograph of the specimen in question, which will be seen to be a male bird. I was assured that there was absolutely no possibility of its having escaped from confinement, but the beauty and freshness of its plumage when I saw it towards the end of April would seem to be in themselves sufficient proof of this.

I am, Sir,

Yours &c.,

J. RUSSELL KENNEDY, R.N.

H.M.S. 'Prince of Wales,'

Lamlash, 12 Oct., 1913.

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SIR,—In 'The Ibis' for October, p. 709, I observe a reproduction of an "interview" from 'The Times' in July last. I regret that several inaccuracies—not to be laid to the Editor's account—occur both in the general statements and in the nomenclature of the avian species referred to in the article, which would require not a few words to rectify (if it were worth them) and would only cumber valuable space. Permit me, therefore, to beg my fellow members not to charge them as *father's sins*.

I am, Sir,

Yours &c.,

HENRY O. FORBES.

Redcliffe,

Beaconsfield,

15 Nov., 1913.

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SIR,—In 'The Ibis' for July there appears an instalment of Messrs. Mathews and Iredale's erudite Reference List of the Birds of New Zealand. I have been studying it carefully to try and discover my old familiar friends after their re-christening, but it has proved a very difficult task. I consider that such a List without any details of the why and wherefore of the wholesale changes they propose as authoritative, is imposing a rather large order on their brethren.

Ornithological tyros like myself who may be engaged, as I happen at present to be, on the study of the New Zealand avifauna, must either use the old "antiquated" nomenclature or wait till our new High Priests inform us why *Hypoleucus*, for instance, is to replace, and how it differs from, *Phalacrocorax*. To take another example: Why is the type of *Stictocarbo* now re-designated *punctatus*, instead of *gaimardi*? Surely, if the type falls for any reason, the genus falls with it.

I shall put a strong curb on my pen if I may be permitted one further short criticism. On p. 420 a new species is described as *Nesierax pottsii* on a "*presumed* (italics the writer's) smaller form" of Bush Hawk. "If later investigation," so the authors continue, "proves that the smaller species is non-existent as *we anticipate* (italics as before), we also *suggest* (italics ditto) that the North Island form will prove separable from the South Island one and the name here given will then be available for that." Is it scientific or according to any existing laws of nomenclature to create a new species on such a basis of conjecture? Moreover, is the future worker on New Zealand ornithology to be dictated to as to the naming of a species that comes for description before him? No author has any right to prepare beforehand a list of names for hypothetical birds and try to tie his future fellow-workers to their use and then calmly claim the priority for such designations. If "as we anticipate" the smaller species should turn out to be "non-existent," and the North Island form should prove *not* "separable from the South Island one," then the literature of the subject has been burdened by a useless name, which might have better remained in the ovary of the future.

I am, Sir,

Yours &c.,

HENRY O. FORBES.

Redcliffe,

Beaconsfield,

15 Nov., 1913.

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SIR,—It may interest some of your readers to learn that an immature Greenland Falcon (*Falco candicans*) flew on board the 'Braemar Castle' in Lat. 38° N. and Long. 12° W. (W. of Lisbon) on October the 21st, and was caught when perching in the rigging. I think this must be the "farthest south" for this species. Large flocks of Pomatorhine Skuas (*Stercorarius pomatorhinus*) were passed in the air and on the water in the Bay of Biscay, some fifty miles south-west of Ushant, on October the 19th, which were evidently migrating southward.

I am, Sir,

Yours &c.,

PHILIP W. MUNN.

Laverstoke, Hants,  
December 4, 1913.

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Mr. George L. Bates writes as follows from Bitye, German Cameroon, under the date 30 Aug., 1913.—The most interesting thing in the way of field-work that I can report is a trip last January to Akonolinga on the Nyong River north of here. The distance is perhaps between 75 and 100 miles from Bitye, by the indirect road one has to travel. I had never been in that direction before, and was surprised at the great change in the look of the country in so short a distance. Akonolinga is at the edge of the "grass-land." There is still forest to be seen about there in places, but a large part of the country is covered with big grass ten feet high, with only a few trees in it. The wide river-bottom there, which is doubtless overflowed in the wet season, was in January a grassy plain, the grass being of a smaller kind than that on the high ground. On this grassy bottom, one who had long been accustomed to the paths and the confined views of this forest country, could feel the delightful sensation of being able to see and to walk at will in any direction. Here many birds were found, including a number of species, especially of the Weaver-bird family, that I had never seen before. There were also a good number of European winter migrants, which are rarely seen here in the forest region.

Especially were Swallows there in immense numbers, skimming by day over the river-bottom plain, especially over parts of it where water was still standing, and gathering in huge flocks to roost at night in the tall grass of the higher ground. As mosquitoes were very abundant, it seems a reasonable guess to suppose that the Swallows were attracted by the numbers of mosquitoes upon which to feed. Only two specimens of *Hirundo rustica* had previously been obtained during many years collecting at various places in this forest region. It would seem that the bulk of the southward winter migration stops in Africa at the edge of the great forest.

Since I have naturally found little that was new lately among the birds here at Bitye, where I have collected so long, I have been turning my attention to a more thorough study of the same old species. I wish I could say I had been learning more about their habits and way of life, which would have been the most interesting kind of study; but my eyesight is not good enough for that. I have been studying pterylography, especially under wing-coverts, which, as I think, promise to furnish valuable taxonomic characters. I have also been dipping a little into anatomy, and it seems to me that I have already been rewarded by happening upon a valuable discovery. I have found that the syrinx in birds of the genus *Smithornis* is either entirely without muscles attached to the bronchial semi-rings, or possesses possibly a single pair of very thin muscles that have escaped my notice. And having bethought me to dissect the muscles and tendons of the leg and foot in the last specimen of *Smithornis* obtained, I found that from the lower part of the tendon of the *Musculus flexor hallucis* a slender vinculum goes to the tendon of the *M. flexor digitorum profundus*, uniting with it a little above the point where it divides into branches going to the three front toes. I feel sufficiently sure of the correctness of these observations to report them now. But of course I will lose no opportunity of confirming them, and I hope to make myself more familiar with those

points in the anatomy of all birds. To find here in Africa, where the lower or anomalous families of Passerine birds have not been hitherto known to be represented except by the *Pitta*, which is merely a stray from the Indian Region, a genus belonging to the anomalous Passerines would be a matter of some importance, especially as I suspect that *Smithornis* will not be found to fit easily into any established family.

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*The International Commission of Zoological Nomenclature.*—In the Zoologischer Anzeiger (vol. xlii. 1913, pp. 418–432 and 473–480) will be found the report of this Commission or Committee appointed by the International Zoological Congress some years ago to advise them on the subject of the codification of the rules of zoological nomenclature. The report of what took place at Monaco in the spring of this year should be carefully studied by all who are interested in this important but vexing question. Perhaps the most interesting action of the Commission as regards ornithological nomenclature is the preparation of a list of 169 generic names of birds with their authorities, references, genotypes, and method of type fixation, based on the International Rules and unanimously agreed upon by a special committee of professional ornithologists consisting of the following:—J. A. Allen (New York), E. Hartert (Tring), C. E. Hellmayr (Munich), H. C. Oberholser (Washington), C. W. Richmond, secretary (Washington), R. Ridgway (Washington), L. Stejneger (Washington), J. W. Stone (Philadelphia).

This list will be found printed at length on pp. 520–528 of the same volume of the Anzeiger. The first thing which will strike English ornithologists is the preponderance of American names on the committee. England is represented by only one name, that of Dr. Hartert, who though now a resident in England is a German by birth; Germany is represented by one name only, France not at all, while America claims six out of the eight names of those on the

Committee. It would be as well, if the Committee hope to get their recommendations and lists of genera universally adopted, to add a few more representatives of other countries to their numbers.

If we now examine the list of genera, we shall find that in most cases the names given are those generally accepted. The list is quite a haphazard one of names arranged in alphabetical order, and apparently only those are included about which most ornithologists are agreed. Generic names in regard to which there has been some controversy, such as *Accentor*, *Cinclus*, *Erithacus*, *Saxicola*, and *Apus*, do not appear in it.

The genus *Charadrius*, however, which has usually been associated with the Golden Plover, must be transferred to the Little Ringed Plover, while the Golden Plover becomes *Pluvialis*. Another change adopted some years ago by the American ornithologists and long resisted on this side of the Atlantic, is here laid down. This is the question of the type of the genus *Colymbus* of Linnæus. In England *Colymbus* has been almost universally used for the Divers or Loons, while in America since about 1882 it has been used for the Grebes.

If we turn to the 10th edition of Linnæus where the genus is originally described, we shall find that it includes four species—*arcticus* (Black-throated Diver), *cristatus* (Great Crested Grebe), *auritus* (Slavonian Grebe), and *podiceps* (American Pied-billed Grebe). Linnæus does not designate any type, nor does an examination of his descriptions, synonyms, or quotations throw any light on his opinions or ideas as it so often does in other cases.

The American argument for making "*arcticus*" the type is that Brisson in 1760 used *Colymbus* for the Grebes and *Mergus* for the Loons, and is thus the first reviser of the genus; but in the first place Brisson was not a binomialist nor did he recognize or quote from Linnæus' work. He adopted the genus *Colymbus* from the pre-Linnæan writer Moehring, not from Linnæus, and in no sense can he be

called a reviser of Linnæus nor a designator of the type of Linnæus' genus.

On the other hand, Latham (Genl. Synopsis Suppl. i. 1787, pp. 294, 295) very definitely adopted Linnæus' genus *Colymbus* for the Loons, and proposed *Podiceps* for the Grebes.

A reference to the British Museum Catalogue will show that up to 1882 when Stejneger (Proc. U.S. Nat. Mus. v. 1882, p. 42) proposed to use *Urinator* for the Divers, the generic term *Colymbus* had been almost universally applied to these birds.

We hope that American ornithologists will see their way to return to what we in England have always considered the more correct usage of this generic term, and we hope that this note will meet the eye of Dr. Richmond, the secretary of the Committee who drew up the list of names, and that he will ask the Committee to reconsider their decision on this point.

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*The Generic name Oxynotus Swains.*—On page 227 of the recently published second part of the fifth volume of Shelley's 'Birds of Africa,' the generic name *Oxynotus* Swainson (Fauna Boreal.-Amer., Birds, p. 483) is used for the little bird known as the "Cusenier" from the island of Mauritius, while *Schetba* Lesson (Traité d'Orn. p. 374) is given as a synonym.

It has been recently pointed out to me by Mr. Tom Iredale, that Swainson's work did not appear until Feb. 1832, whereas Lesson's Traité came out in parts during 1830-31, the portion containing *Schetba* being issued about December 1830 (see Mathews, Nov. Zool. xviii. 1911, p. 14). *Schetba* therefore antedates *Oxynotus*. Unfortunately, however, neither of these names can be used for the Cusenier of Mauritius.

In the case of *Schetba* the type, which is given as *Oxynotus rufiventer*, the Cusenier, in Shelley, is wrongly determined.



A glance at the original description and the list of species given by Lesson will show that the type is obviously (by tautonomy) "le Schetbe" of Buffon = *Lanius rufus* Gm. = *Lantzia rufa* of Madagascar of Shelley's 'Birds' (p. 195), so that it cannot be applied to the Cusenier.

In the case of *Oxynotus* the name is preoccupied by Rafinesque, 1810, for a genus of Fishes.

It is therefore necessary to find a new generic name for the Cusenier of Mauritius, and I would propose *Coquus*, gen. n. (= a cook) as a suitable name with type *Oxynotus rufiventer* Swainson.

The two known species of the genus will therefore be *Coquus rufiventer* (Swains.) from Mauritius, and *Coquus newtoni* (Pollen) from Reunion. Moreover, as *Schetba* Lesson 1830 antedates *Lantzia* Hartl. 1877, the type of which is also *Lanius rufus* Linn., the Rufous Vanga or the Schetbe of Buffon from Madagascar will have in future to be known as *Schetba rufa* (Gmel.).—W. L. SCLATER.

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*Wild Birds Protection Act.*—The Home Secretary has recently appointed a Committee to inquire what action has been taken under the above act for the protection of our wild birds, and to consider whether any amendments of the law or improvements in its administration are required. The members of the Committee are :—The Hon. E. S. Montagu, M.P., Under-Secretary of State for India (chairman); Lord Lucas, Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Agriculture; Mr. Frank Elliott, of the Home Office; Mr. E. G. B. Meade-Waldo, Mr. W. R. Ogilvie-Grant, and Mr. Hugh S. Gladstone. The secretary to the Committee is Mr. H. R. Scott, of the Home Office, to whom any communications on the subject of the inquiry may be made.

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*Penguins in South Georgia.*—To the October number of the American Museum Journal Mr. R. C. Murphy communicates a graphic and richly illustrated account of his

experiences among the petrels, penguins, and sea-elephants of South Georgia during a visit to that desolate island undertaken on behalf of the museum and the Brooklyn Institute, much interesting information being also given with regard to the eight whaling stations on the island. One of the most interesting photographs shows a king-penguin incubating its single egg, which is supported on the "instep," where it is covered by a fold of the skin on the under-surface of the body, the bird standing all the time in the upright posture, and the two sexes relieving one another in the duties of incubation.

The Colonial Office has recently sent a Commission under the leadership of Major Barrett-Hamilton, M.B.O.U., to investigate the condition of the whale and seal fisheries in that desolate antarctic island, and he will doubtless bring us additional information in regard to the bird-life there.

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*General Index to 'The Ibis.'*—Since the last number of 'The Ibis' appeared, a circular has been issued to the Members of the Union asking them to record their wishes in regard to the proposed General Index to 'The Ibis' for the years 1895–1912.

The number of answers received from Members is sufficient to justify the Committee of the Union in proceeding with the work, and it is quite evident that the majority of Members would wish the Index to be prepared on the same lines as the previous one, edited by the late Mr. O. Salvin.

As the cost of this Index volume will be very considerable, and must inevitably strain the financial resources of the Union, the Committee would be very glad to obtain promises of as many subscriptions as possible. The price to Members has been fixed at £1 1s.

Arrangements have been completed for the preparation of the Index; the work is now in hand, and it is hoped the volume may be ready for publication some time in the present year.

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*Change in the method of Publication of 'The Ibis.'*—We wish to draw the attention of Members of the Union and of others to a change in the method of the publication and distribution of 'The Ibis' which has recently been arranged by the Committee.

Henceforth the printers, Messrs. Taylor & Francis, will undertake the actual distribution of the copies of 'The Ibis' to all Members of the Union. All changes of address, letters in regard to non-receipt or delay in receiving the Journal should be addressed as heretofore to the Secretary of the B. O. U., c/o The Zoological Society, Regent's Park, London, N.W.

The agency for the sale of 'The Ibis' to the trade and general public has been placed in the hands of Messrs. William Wesley & Son, 28 Essex Street, Strand, W.C. Members of the B. O. U. desiring to purchase any of the publications at the reduced rates allowed to Members of the Union should communicate with Messrs. W. Wesley & Son.

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*The Annual Meeting of the B. O. U.*—Members are reminded that the Annual General Meeting of the Union will be held this year in accordance with the amendment of Rule 12 (now Rule 13) in March. As has been our usual practice of late years, it will take place on the afternoon of the day on which the British Ornithologists' Club meets. Unfortunately on that day the Meeting-Room at the Zoological Society's offices is required by the Society, and is not available.

The Meeting of the B. O. U. will therefore be held at 3.30 P.M. on Wednesday, March the 18th, in the large room at Pagani's Restaurant, 42 Great Portland Street, Oxford Street, W. Proposers of new Members should either attend themselves to speak on behalf of their candidates or send a letter of recommendation to the Secretary.

The usual dinner will be held in conjunction with the B. O. C. at the same place at 7.0 P.M.